Samuel J Baird's No 177

THE MINISTERIAL TRUST:

A Sermon,

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1825,

AT A MEETING OF

THE PRESBYTERY OF CARLISLE,

IN HAGERS-TOWN, MARYLAND,

On the occasion of the

ORDINATION

AND

INSTALMENT

OF THE

Rev. Matthew Lind Fullerton.

BY THE
REV. DAVID ELLIOTT, A. M.

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THE MINISTERIAL TRUST, &c.

1. Thess. ii. 4.

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

THE ministerial character and office are often greatly misunderstood. In every part of the church, there is a mass of hearers who have very loose notions of ministerial obligation. They view ministers as persons employed to administer to their gratification by the splendid exhibitions of their eloquence, or the portly and well-trained operations of their intellects. And hence they are ever ready to find fault with every thing that is not shaped according to their views, or that, in any way, interferes with their appropriate taste. They suppose it to be entirely within the scope of ministerial employment to ascertain the wishes, and consult the taste of those to whom they preach, and to mould their ministrations accordingly. Especially, if they find any particular doctrine or duty of the gospel to be unpalatable or offensive to their hearers, they should immediately cease to obtrude it on their attention.

Now we need not stop to determine whether these views arise from hostility to the truth, or a captious temper, or ignorance of the nature of ministerial obligation. We believe that all these causes operate, in a greater or less degree, on different persons, and under different circumstances. Nor are we certain but ministers themselves may sometimes be the occasion of fostering such views in their hearers.—They may accommodate themselves so much to popular notions on this subject, as to lead to the as-

sumption that the end of all their ministrations is to please the people. Or, they may, in various ways, lower the character of the ministerial office, and divest it of that awful, solemn responsibility, which the scriptures every where associate with it.

But from whatever causes, these loose and mistaken notions of ministerial character and responsibility arise, the fact is certain that they exist, and exist to an extent highly detrimental to the success of a preached gospel, as well as to the peace and comfort of those who preach it. From the high claims which multitudes set up on this subject, they are never satisfied, unless it be at the expense of ministerial fidelity; and thus the great end of a preached gospel is frustrated. But how is the matter to be rectified? If pleasing men be an evil, how shall we avoid it, and yet secure the radical objects for which the ministry was instituted? If the people are not pleased, they will desert us, and our ministrations will be void, of course.

We must follow the apostolic example. We must do as Paul did. Though in matters of indifference, he became "all things to all men;" in those which involved the honour of Christ, he "gave place by subjection," to no man. In matters of this kind, he "sought not glory of men." On the contrary, he was "bold in God, to speak the gospel of God, even with much contention," and in the midst of many sufferings. And to those who were concerned to know the principles by which he was impelled, he explained by magnifying his office, and pointing to the high and solemn responsibilities which it imposed, and which superceded every attempt to subjugate him to the popular will.

And such, my brethren, must be our course. Acting under the solemn conviction that we have received the gospel from God—that we hold it as a trust, for the execution of which he has prepared us by his grace,* we must, in the full view of this, proceed to its publication, as those who are accountable to the

*Such appears to be the force and import of the original expression.

heart-searching God, and not to men. And if any blame our madness, or complain that our preaching affords them no entertainment, we must answer with the Apostle, and leave the event with God. "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

Omitting any critical remarks to which the terms of the text might lead, I shall invite your serious attention to the two following points, embraced in the passage:

I. The gospel, considered as a ministerial trust.

II. That our ministrations should bear on their front the marks of evangelical responsibility and the fear of God, uninfluenced by popular favour.

I. We have the gospel considered as *a ministerial trust.* "*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel.*" Let us fix our attention on the nature and magnitude of this trust.

And, in the first place, it is very obvious to remark that it is an *official trust.* There is doubtless, a sense in which the gospel is a trust to every man to whom it is made known. But there is a peculiar sense, in which it is a trust to ministers. It is committed to them as public agents in the house of God, to be published by them, with a view to the salvation of their fellow-men. It is, therefore, an official investiture to be improved for their Master's use, and the benefit of those to whom they are sent.

This is not an unimportant item in estimating the nature of the trust. It serves to shew the high responsibility involved in it. Under every administration of government, official trusts are always considered of the highest and most responsible kind.—Hence they are imposed under the sanction of an oath, securing a faithful adherence to the principles, and practical conformity to the order established by the supreme power of the state. And the officer who betrays that which has been confided to his hands, is justly considered as meriting a heavier punishment. And certainly the official responsibili-

ty of ministers of the gospel must be of the highest kind. They have received their commission from the highest authority, having been "*allowed of God*, to be put in trust with the gospel." Their induction to office too, has been under the weightiest sanctions which the authority of scriptural forms can impose; and they are bound by every principle of honour and honesty to execute their trust, agreeably to the tenor of their commission.

I shall not here enter into the discussion, what it is that officially constitutes a man a minister of God: whether it is one particular qualification, or a combination of them: whether it is ordination by a Bishop, or ordination by Presbyters. I take it for granted that men of sober minds are prepared to admit that there are good ministers of Jesus Christ in other denominations than their own, of various gifts and endowments. But wherever such are found, they hold in their hands the gospel, committed to them, in trust, by the great king and head of the church. And this trust they hold under all the solemnities of official investiture.

This trust is, also, of *a spiritual nature.* It relates to spiritual things. It was the mistake of the Apostles while yet in their novitiate, that the kingdom of the Messiah was of a temporal character; that it imbodied the honours and emoluments of rank and office among their fellow-men. And they seem to have been so entranced with the prospects before them, as to have been betrayed into an ardent controversy, which of them should be the greatest in the new kingdom which the Saviour was about to establish.

We should beware, my brethren, of falling into an error, in any respect bordering on that which we have noticed in the Apostles of our Lord. The gospel is not a commercial deposit. It is not a trust to be used to advance our pecuniary interests, or to furnish us with the means of growing rich. Neither are we to view it, as the road to worldly honours, or the pathway by which to mount to the pinnacle of

human glory. All this is apart from the nature o the trust which has been committed to our hands. And the minister who so mournfully mistakes the nature of his office, and all his life is labouring in the Master's vineyard, for the worldly honours and emoluments of his station, "it were better for him that he had never been born." For "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink." It consists not in such perishable materials.

We do not say, indeed, that "the labourer is not worthy of his hire." Nay, our Lord himself has "ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel."* But this is widely different from making the preaching of the gospel *a trade*, by which to accumulate wealth, or an entrance into the ministry, an official passport to the fading honours of the world.

Let it be remembered then, that the ministerial trust is of a spiritual character. It is to be employed with a special relation to spiritual things. The spiritual interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, together with our own, and those of our fellow sinners, are the objects about which the ministry of the gospel is to be exercised. It is, moreover, spiritual, as it embraces in it the operations of the Holy Ghost, by which alone our ministrations can ever obtain their full effect. No ministry, let it be ever so faithful, or enlightened, or pungent, can attain its object without the unction of the Spirit of God. This is a familiar truth: but it is one that cannot be too often repeated, nor too deeply engraved on the heart of every minister of Jesus Christ. And this spiritual unction is what distinguishes the ministry of Christ's servants from that of all other teachers. Among all the wise men of Chaldea, or Egypt, or Greece, or Rome, what sophist ever had his instructions enforced by the energies of the Holy Ghost? The ministers of Jesus Christ alone, have this seal of heaven affixed to the word which they preach. From the day of Pentecost till the present hour, they have executed

*1. Cor. ix, 14.

their trust under the broad sanction of heaven, witnessed by the effusions of the Holy Ghost.

We may add, also, that of so highly spiritual a character is the trust which has been deposited in the hands of Christ's ministers, that temporal interests must often be sacrificed to secure spiritual results. Reputation, and health, and ease, and wealth, and honours, and even life itself, must all be conceded to the spiritual ends of the gospel ministry. The Master's work must be done; the spiritual purposes for which the gospel was put into the hands of a living ministry, must be consummated, though in the accomplishment of this, we may be called to endure ignominy, and reproach, and persecution, and death itself. So true is it, that the trust is purely of a spiritual nature.

Again, this trust is one which involves *the interests and happiness of immortal souls*. We have already glanced at this. But it deserves a more distinct illustration, as it will serve to shew the magnitude of the trust, and its great responsibility.

I shall not attempt to give you an idea of an immortal spirit. It is too subtile to be imbodied by any description which we might hazard. But that every man has a soul, and that this soul is immortal, are truths resting on the authority of scripture. On the same authority we learn the mournful history of the degradation and ruin, in which our souls, and all their immortal interests, are involved. "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* Death, in its most extended signification—a death which pursues the guilty soul into the world of spirits, and torments and distracts it, without destroying its vitality, is the threatened portion of every degenerate son and daughter of our fallen parents. Nor is it only threatened. The curse has gone forth.—Thousands have fallen under its operation, and are now filling hell with their horrible moanings of despair. And O how chilling to anticipate the intermi-

*Rom. v, 12.

nable nature of their woe! Ye ministers of Jesus Christ! have you never, in the solemn moments of retired meditation, followed the wretched souls of departing sinners down to those regions of despair? And have not your hearts been overwhelmed and melted within you, while you have witnessed the horrors of their doom!

But I design not to awaken your sensibilities. The gospel which is committed to our hands, is intended to repair the ruins of the fall, by rescuing such immortal souls from perdition. I do not mean to say that it will reach those who have already passed into hell. This is a dream which shall never be realised. But the gospel contains God's plan of saving wretched sinners who are yet on this side eternity. It unfolds to them salvation through the blood of his only begotten Son. To proclaim this salvation—to recommend and enforce it on the attention of sinners, is the business of the gospel ministry. *Here lies the great weight of our trust.*

You will perceive, then, that it is a trust which involves the interests of immortal souls. The manner in which this trust is executed will have a powerful influence on their situation throughout eternity. For, doubtless the gospel may be so preached as to have a deadening influence on the soul, and hasten its maturity for the perdition of ungodly men. While, on the other hand, it may be so dispensed as to prove powerfully instrumental in training it up for the mansions of the blessed. And when we reflect that this influence which we exert on the souls of men, in the execution of our official trust, is of vast extent, reaching to thousands and thousands of immortal spirits, it should make us tremble for the result. Even the most faithful ministry, while it conveys life to those who improve it, carries destruction in its train to those who do not accept its overtures. "For, says Paul, we are unto God, a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are a savour of death unto death, and to the

other, a savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"*

We remark farther, that *the honour of the Saviour is deeply involved in this trust.* Ministers are "ambassadors for Christ," sent to treat with sinners about the weightiest concerns. They appear in the name of their Master, to vindicate his honour, and to publish his plans of mercy to perishing sinners.—The honour of the Saviour, therefore, is enshrined, as it were, in our ministrations. In the gospel, with which we are entrusted, his character and work are displayed in their most attractive forms. And whether his glory shall remain untarnished, or be marred and defaced, will depend on the manner in which we dispose of the trust which he has committed to our hands. On our exhibition of the truths of the gospel will depend, in a very high degree, under God, whether men, while they pass by, shall "wag their heads" in derision, or enchanted with the Saviour's glory, shall be heard exclaiming, "Hosanna, in the highest!"

It is certainly no trifling trust that so eminently involves the honour of the Saviour. He is "the mighty God," and his glory is blended with that of the Father. And let it be recollected that he associates with himself, and his Father, the ambassadors of his cross. Having commissioned them to go, and preach the gospel, he adds, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me."† Ministers, therefore, in their official characters, being associated with Christ and his Father, should be careful to execute their trust in such a manner, as may be most for the Redeemer's glory. It is too great a stake not to awaken the deepest solicitude, as to its faithful and honourable disposal.

Nor, while speaking of this trust, should we forget to remark that it is a trust which must be *surrendered, and accounted for, at the tribunal of Jesus Christ.* Ministers are "stewards of the mysteries of God," and of their stewardship they must render

*II. Cor. ii, 15, 16.—†Matt. x, 40.

an account in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. The ministerial trust is not a deposit which shall be withdrawn on the credit of those to whom it has been confided, but a full account must be rendered. And in what a solemn, and fearful point of light does this place the trust with which we have been invested? Our scheme of interpretation; the whole system of our doctrines; our trains of reasoning in relation to evangelical truth; our practical application of scriptural precepts; our care of souls; in short, the whole of our ministerial labours, in all their details, must be accounted for at the judgment seat of Christ. There, the slothful servant shall be accounted wicked, and he who suffered souls to perish through his neglect, shall himself perish, with a more fearful doom. The occasion will be one of most alarming character to those who have not appreciated and improved the trust committed to their hands. To the faithful steward it will, indeed, be an occasion of joy. The scrutiny of that day will unfold his love and his zeal, his activity and his success in his Master's cause; and with no ordinary emotions of triumph, he will appear before his gracious Lord, and exclaim, "Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me!" Still, my brethren, the prospect of that strict account which we must render at the bar of Christ, let our fidelity have been ever so great, is enough to fill us with the deepest concern. Shall we not keep it constantly in mind, that we may, in the view of it, be stimulated to greater activity in the service of our enthroned Redeemer? This leads me to observe,

II. That our ministrations should bear on their front *the marks of evangelical responsibility, and the fear of God, uninfluenced by popular favour.* "*Even so we speak,*" that is, in a manner becoming the nature and magnitude of the trust deposited in our hands, under a due sense of our responsibility, "*not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*"

But how shall ministers make it appear that they feel the weight of their trust, and that they are influenced by the fear of God, and not of men? In affording this demonstration of the character of their ministry, it is evident, that their ministrations should be *scriptural*. What we preach must be evidently founded on the word of God. It is not presumed, indeed, that for every doctrine and duty which we inculcate, an express scriptural warrant can be adduced. Fair inference, and legitimate deduction must be admitted. But whatever, according to the established laws of exegesis, cannot be sustained from the scriptures, must be abandoned. Men's own theories can never be admitted as a substitute for evangelical truth, nor can the subtle speculations of metaphysical minds be allowed to usurp the place of the dictates of the spirit of inspiration. "To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to them, it is because there is no truth in them." The Bible being the only infallible rule of faith and practice, every thing that relates either to doctrine or duty, must be ultimately referred to it for decision. To this unerring standard, we must bring all our opinions, that they may be stamped with the seal of inspiration.

But, what if others should have thought out the system of truth which the Bible contains, and published it to the world in the form of a *Creed*, is it not a departure from scriptural simplicity to regulate our ministrations by such a formula? We cannot perceive it, my brethren. What if other men, of other times should have arrived at the same scriptural results with ourselves, must we not adopt the truth, because they adopted it before us? Must we reject scriptural formularies which others may have presented, because we have not had the honour of elaborating them for ourselves? If the principles which they contain be unscriptural, let them be rejected. But if they teach what the scriptures teach, where can be the sin of adopting and subscribing

them as our own? But they are human systems, we shall be told. So our own opinions and views of scriptural truth are all human, in the same sense: and on this principle, we must form no opinions of scriptural truth, because they would be human opinions, in derogation of the only infallible rule of faith and practice laid down in the Bible. The truth, however, is, that if our views be scriptural, it matters not where, or by whom they have been taught. If the spirit of Bible truth breathes through our ministrations, they will stand the scrutiny of him who trieth the heart, though as subservient to its exhibition, we should be found to have adopted the creed of the famous Calvin, or the confession of the Westminster divines!

But there is another sense in which our ministrations should be scriptural. They should be enforced by scriptural authority, in preference to the demonstrations of reason. I do not mean to exclude the use of reason and argument in support of evangelical truth. Let them have their proper place. But scriptural authority is always the best. It is the highest sanction which ministers can give to the doctrines which they preach. It is an authority which good men will always venerate, which bad men will often fear, and which even infidels will sometimes hesitate to convert into ridicule. This frequent appeal to scriptural authority may not, indeed, be the most palatable and popular, with those who do not love the Bible. It may be deemed quaint and puritanical. But the perverted taste of men who seek to be entertained rather than profited, must not be permitted to divert us from that course which would be most likely to result in the conversion of souls. And what so likely to carry conviction and spiritual life into the heart of a sinner, as the pure streams of Bible truth, or the full weight of scriptural authority?—And that ministry which gives to scriptural authority all its heavenly force, seems to furnish the fairest exhibition of evangelical responsibility and the fear of God.

Our ministrations should also be *faithful*. We must give a full and commanding exhibition of the plan of salvation which the gospel reveals. The doctrines of the cross must be placed before the sinner in all their humbling glory. Their most offensive details must not be kept back. Whatever is necessary to induce the sinner to take refuge in this crucified Saviour, must also be presented in all its mortifying force. The terrors of the law must be proclaimed: sin must be exposed: and the sinner himself must be followed and driven from all his hiding places, till he is constrained to take shelter under the covert of *his* wings who is as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."*

In the faithful execution of their trust, ministers will be obliged often to interfere with popular views and prejudices. None of these things, however, must move them. Whatever stands in the way of the gospel; whatever would obstruct its entrance into the heart, must be torn away. Deep-rooted prejudices, malignant passions, head-strong lusts, the most firmly rivited habits of iniquity, must all be laid hold of with a fearless hand, that they may be made to give place to the love of Jesus in the heart. Men will, indeed, insist on being pleased.—The great must be flattered: the rich must be courted: the proud moralist must have his cold notions served up from the sacred desk: the self-righteous Pharisee must have his hope of heaven left undisturbed. In short, every ungodly man who imagines that he has a little influence, (and who does not imagine this?) must have his influence respected by the messenger of God, or it will be converted into a weapon for his annoyance.

But what of all this, my brethren? "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto men more than unto God, judge ye."† The ministers of Jesus Christ have higher responsibilities to fulfil than those imposed by the lawless demands of men.

* Is. xxxii, 2.—† Acts iv, 19.

who would divert them from the faithful execution of their trust. In the discharge of these responsibilities, they must go forward with an unhesitating intrepidity, relying on the protection of him who hath said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."* If the Saviour is degraded, whether under the garb of philosophy or religion, they must tax all their energies to exalt him to his rightful throne. If religion is dishonoured, they must endeavour to restore her tarnished glory. If the house of God has been converted into "a den of thieves," they must neither fear, nor fail to drive these traffickers out of the temple.† Their zeal may be blamed: the old insurrectionary cry, "These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also,"‡ may be rung in their ears; even the sword of persecution may be drawn to be crimsoned in their blood. But what then? Being faithful unto the death, they shall obtain a crown of life: and the murderous cry of their destroyers shall be responded by the heavenly plaudit of their approving Saviour, "well done, good and faithful servant—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

But while our ministrations are marked by a faithful, fearless discharge of the responsibilities which they involve, they should be equally distinguished by their *affectionate spirit*. There is a bold, and fearless energy which, without the chastening spirit of love, often becomes wild, and lawless, and intolerant, and is characterised by rudeness and violence. This may be indulged from the idea that it gives effect to the exhibitions of divine truth, and elevation and independence to the living ministry. But after all, it may be strongly tinctured with the sin of man-pleasing. That ministry then, which would give characteristic evidence of being influenced by the fear of God, must breathe the affectionate spirit of the Redeemer. Without any lack of energy, or any of that vacillating temper which would compromise

* Psalms cv, 15.—† John ii, 13, 17.—‡ Acts xvii, 6.

the interests of the Redeemer, it must captivate by the kindly, benevolent strain which runs through all its functions. The ministers of Jesus Christ, like their divine master, must weep over the miseries which they cannot relieve, and pray for the obstinacy which they cannot cure. Their meekness and kindness to those who oppose themselves, may be placed to the account of a pusillanimous, or artful, or unmanly spirit, but they will have the consolation to know that it is the Spirit of Christ. The censure of the world must not be permitted to deaden the spirit of love, or restrain its kindly influences even in favour of those who pervert it to their injury. There is not a more lovely sight amidst the ruins of our wretched world, than that of a minister of Christ yearning to pour the consolations of the Holy Ghost into the souls of those who are pouring curses on his head. Oh, it is the very spirit of the Saviour, whose dying prayer was, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Once more, we observe, that the ministrations of Christ's servants should be *solemn*. The trust with which they are invested is one of grave importance, and it should be discharged in a grave and solemn manner. Ministers should appear before their people, impressed with the magnitude and weight of their office. They should come as those who hold in their hands a commission from the Lord of heaven and earth, to throw themselves in the gap between the destroying angel of Jehovah, and their poor, perishing fellow-sinners. They should carry on their hearts the wants, and the wretchedness of human souls, sunk in sin, exposed to wrath, and passing in crowds to the abodes of the damned. They should realise the tremendous issue which hangs on the messages which they deliver, on the very moment in which they utter the denunciations, and proclaim the promises of God's prescriptive will. That very moment may be pregnant with consequences to the souls of their hearers which may run throughout eternity.

And who would not feel solemn, while thus standing on the threshold of eternity, commissioned to guard the passes which lead to destruction, so that no soul enter and perish, through his neglect? Whose soul is not composed to almost more than human seriousness, while with the eye of his master and judge upon him, he discharges the critical trust of pointing out to his brethren in guilt, the path-way to glory? Oh! it is no place to trifle! What minister, on this holy, fearful eminence can permit himself to indulge in levity? Who, under all the more than earthly weight of this sacred trust, can descend from the holy tabernacle of God, where the solemn tones of ethereal spirits burst upon his ear, or the cries of the damned reverberate from the mighty deep, to flourish through a smart saying, or to entertain his hearers with "trifles light as air?" Who can yield to the demands of those who seek only to be entertained with the playful efforts of a sportive fancy, or the shadowy progeny of a creative imagination? The ministers of Jesus Christ are engaged in a work which requires the gravest exercise of a mind overawed by the presence of Jehovah, and trained to seriousness under the tuition of the Holy Ghost. And in the discharge of their official functions, they should carry with them this appropriate indication of the rigid sanctity of ministerial obligation.

Having detained you so long, a very few closing remarks shall suffice.

And, first, I remark that with regard to us who are ministers of the gospel, this subject is calculated to remind us of our weighty responsibility. The magnitude of the trust, and the immense interests, and solemn results which it involves, are enough to overwhelm us. Even Paul himself seems to shrink from a close view of the results of ministerial influence on the souls of men, and with trembling sensibility exclaims, "*Who is sufficient for these things?*" And, if Paul was ready to bow beneath the weight of such responsibility, whose spirit does not almost

faint, on the assumption, and in the development of this heavenly trust? There is only one avenue of encouragement. It comes from the appointment, and promised grace of him who calls us to this office, and who condescends to employ our humble instrumentality for the higher manifestation of his glory.—The Saviour himself has said, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" and has appended this gracious promise, "lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* And an Apostle has added, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."†

Here, then, is our charter, and the ground of our encouragement against despondency. Because the Saviour has commanded us to preach the gospel, and promised to be with us, and because the power is of God, and not of us, we venture the high responsibilities of ministerial employment. But while we go forward in the Master's name, let us weigh well the nature of the deposit which we hold in our hands. It is a trust for the use of souls, and the exhibition of the Redeemer's glory. And let it never be forgotten that it is a trust for which we must account at the tribunal of God. What then will it avail us to have had the applause of the thoughtless multitude? or to have gained the fading honours, which fame confers upon her votaries? Collect into one view all that sinful mortals can bestow—honours, and riches, and fame, and flattering, cringing homage; will they be a sufficient reward for infidelity to God our Saviour? Ah! no, brethren. One hour of that agonizing horror which broods over the souls of the damned, will outweigh them all. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," then, let us be diligent, and faithful, and zealous in the discharge of our ministerial functions. Our zeal, and faithfulness may, in-

*Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.—† II. Cor. iv, 7.

deed, sometimes bring us into conflict with the bad passions of ungodly men. The tongue of the profane may be loosed, and the mouths of mischievous men may be opened to defame us. But let none of these things drive us from the path of duty.—"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub; how much more shall they call them of his household."* The troubled waters must disgorge their filth, and the wrath of man must be permitted to pour its turbid streams along our path. But let our confidence be in God, and as those who "were allowed of God, to be put in trust with the gospel, even so let us speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

And let the people learn, from this subject, not to set up pretensions in relation to the ministry, which cannot be satisfied. How anxious are men to be pleased? And when not pleased, how bitterly do they often complain? But, my dear friends, let me remind you, that the ministry was instituted for higher ends than to amuse a vitiated taste, or to gratify "itching ears." We are sent to preach to our fellow-sinners the solemn truths of the gospel, and to employ our instrumentality in saving their souls.—This is our business with them, and this we must discharge at our peril, whether, in doing it, we please them or not. Let me, therefore, warn men against interfering with the faithful exhibition of gospel truth, by the ministry of reconciliation. Let them seek rather to be profited than pleased. Let them remember that they too must give an account to that God who trieth the heart. And let them so attend to the messages of his grace, as delivered by his servants, that they may be instrumental in saving their souls from death, and preparing them for the enjoyment of eternal life, in the presence of their God and Redeemer!

*Matt. x, 24, 25.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified;" and that we, his unworthy servants, being found faithful unto the death, may, each of us, obtain a crown of life! Amen.

No 878
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CHARGES,

WITH

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS,

DELIVERED AT

HAGERS-TOWN, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1825.

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. MATTHEW LIND FULLERTON.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM PAXTON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE introduction of men to important offices is always a public, a solemn, and an interesting event. The inauguration of a President is done in the presence of the Representatives of the nation—before a large concourse of people, and with the solemnity of an oath.

The coronation of Kings and Emperors is still more splendid and august; generally performed by a Dignitary of the Church, and accompanied with prayer to the "King of kings, and the Lord of lords."

The Kingdom, or Church of Christ, is infinitely more glorious, extensive and durable than the secular kingdoms of this world. Its officers are no less truly dignified, honourable and necessary, than the rulers of civil society. They are ambassadors for Christ—they are ministers, to whom are committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and their introduction to office ought to be marked with solemnities equally dignified and sacred.

Aaron and his sons were introduced into the ministry of the tabernacle with a pompous train of ceremonies. Dressed in rich and splendid robes, they were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and there consecrated to God by the "holy, anointing oil," poured upon their heads.

Jesus Christ, who has an unchangeable priesthood, "Glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest, but was called of God, as was Aaron." He was introduced into his public ministry by baptism—the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." When he had finished his personal ministry, and was about to ascend to his native heaven, he commissioned his Apostles, "To go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to do all things, whatsoever he had commanded them; and promised to be with them always, even to the end of the world;" but directed them to "Tarry at Jerusalem until they should receive the promise of the Father, and be endued with power from on high." They, accordingly, tarried until the memorable day of Pentecost, when the spirit descended upon them, and qualified them for the discharge of their important work.

The Apostles afterwards ordained Elders in every Church:—they prayed over them, and laid their hands upon them, by which the spirit was communicated, and the successors of the Apostles were enabled, not only to preach the Gospel, but to confirm it, "By signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

The same rites are still retained in designating, and appointing men to the ministerial office. It is not, indeed, pretended that the Spirit, in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts, is now communicated by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. The age of miracles is past; the necessity, for such gifts, has ceased; the sacred volume is completed, and christianity is established in the world. But why may not the Spirit, so far as his influence is necessary to the state of the church, still be communicated by these rites? The Spirit, as a spirit of wisdom, of love, and of a sound mind, is no less necessary now, than in the first ages of christianity; and why may he not be communicated by him, who was himself anointed with the Spirit above measure—who is head over all things to his church—and who has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world?"

These observations have been made in order to introduce the special business of this day. You have invited Mr. Fullerton to become your Teacher; and the Presbytery are now met to ordain him to the Gospel ministry, and instal him as your Pastor.

[Here the Ordination was performed, as prescribed in the form of Government.]

CHARGE.

My young Friend and Brother:

"By prayer and the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery, you have taken part with us in this ministry," and are ordained to the service of God, in the Gospel of his Son.

You enter this field of service at no common, or ordinary period of the Church. Look every where around you—a spirit of religious enterprise and exertion has pervaded all the nations of christendom, and roused them from their slumbers. The Bible, the word of life, has been spread abroad throughout the world; it has entered the cottage of the poor man, and made his heart to sing; it has enlightened the mind of ignorance and superstition, and transformed the savage into a meek and humble disciple of Jesus.

With what unexampled zeal have Missionaries gone forth to evangelize the world! "*They have* forsaken father and mother, houses and lands, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's." Nay, "they have not counted their own lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they received of the Lord Jesus." They have visited the distant isles of the sea—they have gone to the remote regions of the world, to spread the triumphs of the Cross. The world is their field of action! and the ends of the earth, the only acknowledged limits of their operation.

And what effects have they produced? "The wilderness and the solitary places have been made glad by them, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." The temples of the heathen have been demolished; their idols have been burned; the Gospel has been preached where enchantments had been muttered to devils, and the songs of salvation have been sung where the yell of the savage had resounded.

Plans have been laid, and measures have been adopted to provide an asylum for the long lost sheep of the house of Israel; where the converted sons of Abraham might collect and worship him whom *their fathers slew and hanged on a tree.**

Are not these things evident indications that "God is about to bring in the Jews, together with the fulness of the Gentile nations?" Are they not signs, in the moral horizon, that the day has began to dawn, "when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the seas?" Are they not evidences that Jesus is collecting, arranging, and marshalling his "sacramental host," for the final overthrow of the kingdom of darkness? and that, "the kingdoms and nations of this world shall, shortly, become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ?"

We congratulate you, Sir, that you are entering on your ministerial service at this auspicious moment. It must encourage your heart, and strengthen your hands, to think that, "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." You cannot, surely, think to sit still and be an idle spectator of the salvation of the Lord! You cannot think of not participating in the labours and triumphs of the Gospel. You cannot think of relinquishing that starry crown which they shall wear, who turn many to righteousness. No, assuredly! These things must stimulate you to great exertion; bring out, into active operation, all your intellectual and moral resources; and excite you to "come to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

With all the excitements and advantages, however, which this flattering æra holds out before you, permit me to remind you, that you will find your duties both numerous and difficult; and that your responsibility is both solemn and interesting.

"We charge you therefore, before God and the

*None will suppose this refers to the purchase of Grand Island, by Noah, but to the Societies formed for meliorating the condition of the Jews, and the measures they adopted.

Lord Jesus Christ, that you take heed to the ministry which you have received of the Lord; that you fulfil it. Study to show thyself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine, continue in them, for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them who hear thee."

*To this direction of Paul to Timothy, I would call your special attention.

1. Take heed unto yourself, That you make improvement in knowledge and in science. You have passed through a course of trial, with approbation. You are thought to possess that Apostolic qualification for the ministy, "Apt to teach." But no youthful stock of knowledge, however large, will be sufficient for a life of usefulness and respectability; it will soon be exhausted, and our barrenness will appear to all men, and render us both unprofitable and contemptible. "Give yourself then to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine—Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all men. Most parts of science may be useful; all of them will be ornamental; but that which is, properly, theological, is necessary and indispensible. Show yourself, then, "a scribe, well instructed in the kingdom of heaven, bringing out of your treasures things both new and old."

2. Take heed unto yourself, That you grow in grace, and make improvement in the divine life.—Experience of the truth and power of religion is, doubtless, of much importance, in order to preach the Gospel with propriety and success. It will give a warmth, an ardour, a spirit to all your ministrations. By this you will more readily enter into the feelings, the exercises, and experiences of those

*Those who were present at the Ordination, will here find a few things which were not delivered. They had been written, but, lest the service might have been thought too tedious, they were omitted.

committed to your care. You will be better able to confirm the doubting—to guide the perplexed, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit.

3. Take heed to your walk and conversation, That it be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ.—Nay, "Even adorn the doctrine of God, your Saviour, in all things," exhibiting it in its most beautiful attire, that others "seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." Consistency of character—the honour of the Gospel, and the success of your ministry, all require this. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

4. "Take heed also to your doctrine. In doctrine show uncorruptness, sound speech which cannot be blamed; that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed." You have made a good profession. Continue in it. "Follow not after cunningly devised fables;" the vain theories of speculative men, and philosophy, falsely so called. Let all your doctrines be founded on divine truth, and supported by arguments drawn from the oracles of God. "To the law and to the testimony have constant recourse: If any man speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in him."

Let your doctrine be Evangelical. "Preach the Gospel to every creature," was the charge Christ gave to his Apostles. Their great business was, To proclaim the good-news—the glad-tidings of free salvation to every one that should believe.—Agreeably to this, Paul preached "Christ crucified—the wisdom of God, and the power of God, to every one that believed." By this direction, however, we do not mean that morality should be neglected, or excluded from a place in your public teaching. The Gospel is a doctrine according to godliness. We do not make void the law through faith. The morality however, of the gospel is not the cold, the dry, the

impracticable system of the philosopher; but a morality founded in regeneration of the heart, practiced upon evangelical principles, and promoted by Gospel motives.

In one word—Let your high and responsible station be daily recollected. God has placed you as "a watchman upon the walls of Zion; you are, therefore, to hear the word at his mouth, and warn men from him. When God shall say, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will God require at your hand."

But, while the terror of this awful retribution ought to alarm the unfaithful watchman, the glorious reward of fidelity ought to encourage and animate the faithful servant. In this careful discharge of personal and official duties, "*He shall save both himself and them that hear him.*" What animating considerations! Personal salvation is held out as an excitement to persevering faithfulness. "You shall save yourself!"—Salvation! Who can calculate the amount of happiness contained in it! Who can estimate the value of a crown of glory that fadeth not away! If any thing can add to the personal glory of the faithful servant, it must be the consideration that he has been instrumental to the salvation of others; that he has many for his crown, his joy, and his rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Before the magnitude of these motives the laurel of the warrior withers; the crown of the Emperor ceases to sparkle, the possession of a world is contemptible! Let them have their full weight upon you—endeavour to feel all their force.—"Feed the flock of God committed to your care; and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory."

CHARGE

TO THE CONGREGATION.

To the people of this congregation we would take the liberty of making a short address. You have obtained the Pastor of your choice. We rejoice with you upon the occasion. You have heard some of your Minister's duties stated—Remember your duties and obligations are reciprocal.

1. Is he to preach the Gospel? You are, certainly, to attend upon his ministry, and receive the word at his mouth; you cannot, otherwise, expect to profit by him.—Fidelity to your engagements; personal respect to your Teacher, and your own interest all demand this. But you will feel higher obligations still, when you consider him, "The Ambassador of God to you," and recollect that Christ has said, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Such considerations must instantly overcome and destroy a crowd of those trifling things which often detain members from the Church.

2. Submit to him in the regular exercise of discipline—To the Apostles were committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with this declaration, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This authority, in some measure at least, is still held in the hands of their successors; Christ still governs his Church by the ministry of men; he, therefore, who opposes the discipline of the Church, opposes an ordinance of God.

3. Give him, regularly, that competent support which you have promised; that, being free from

worldly embarrasment, he may give himself wholly to the duties of his sacred function—Your spiritual interest unites with the principles of common honesty in binding you to this duty.

4. Assist him in his important work, by family instruction and government—Altho' his public discourses ought to be plain, and easily understood, yet it is impossible that sermons, corresponding with the dignity of the pulpit, or formed according to the prevailing taste of our times, can be understood by those who have not been taught the rudiments of religion in a more familiar manner. Public discourses, then, will, in a great measure, be lost to your children and domestics, if family instruction be neglected.

Finally. Pray for him, that a door of utterance may be opened to him; that he may declare the word of God with boldness; that he may be faithful and successful. This involves your own salvation—You shall shine as gems in your preacher's crown, and meet each other with mutual congratulations on the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

"And now," brethren, "we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified."—AMEN.